

Posted by u/Foreign-Affect7871 3 hours ago 🏠

## We Were Mistaken

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We are the Thonraxians. For two millennia, we have ruled a wide sector of this galaxy. A thousand species bend to our will, the wealth of ten thousand systems flows into our hands. The great golden throneship, symbol of Protartis the Third, the one whose many glorious titles cannot be recited in a single year, has orbited our star – undisturbed - for a millennium.

We watched 6 centuries ago as a young species, far out on the third arm, broke the bonds of their home world. They spread and colonized their home system, as so many had done before. Discovering the means to move between stars, they began to colonize other systems.

We watched as they encountered the My'an'tr'si. Fleeing this encounter in their remaining starships, they returned to the embrace of their home. The My'an'tr'si followed. For 25 long years, the Humans and the My'an'tr'si struggled. At long last and at great cost, the Humans pushed the My'an'tr'si back.

We watched as the Intrix defeated a weakened My'an'tr'si. The Intrix then turned to the Humans. The colonies of Humans in other systems emptied as they returned to the Human home world to repel the Intrix.

We watched as the Humans desperately fought the Shnn, the Biatlemat, the G'ndor, the Ssslsss, and others. Then a change occurred, instead of returning home defeated or victorious, fleets entering the Human's system vanished - never to be heard of again. Other species sent probes and exploratory vessels. The probes fell silent as they crossed into Human space. Lifeboats and escape pods with the crews of the exploratory vessels were returned by sleek, dark ships. The crews only shook their heads when asked of their voyages.

We watched as the Human's star began to dim. Carefully placed observation platforms peering into Human space from afar sent reports of gigantic structures being constructed. Over time, these structures slowly joined together as the Humans formed their Dyson Sphere. Eventually, the Human star was obscured completely.

We watched as the Humans began to build on a second system. Barren with no intrinsic value, unclaimed. Over time, the star in this system dimmed and then disappeared. Slowly, over the centuries, the Humans spread, ever adding to their growing collection of Dyson Spheres. Always silent as they worked. Sleek, black ships the only sightings as they silently returned errant species who wandered into their space.

We watched as the lifeform from Galaxy 7-897 entered the edge of our sector. Vastly immense, this destroyer of worlds feasted on planetary cores. Devouring all but the very innermost planet in the first system it entered, it paused to reproduce, dividing into two.

We watched as the 2 lifeforms approached the inhabited Lantlax system. Fleets of mighty warships, capable of ravishing planets, met the lifeforms. The mighty fleets and the staggering displays of energy unleashed from their armaments were ignored. The lifeforms feasted.

We watched as the now 4 lifeforms journeyed on to another, uninhabited, system. A mighty armada formed to await their arrival. Then, eight massive ships appeared, of a design unknown in the sector. A sleek, dark ship left one of the ships and delivered an audio message to the armada, "Your ships are nothing against this threat. This is ours to solve. Leave this system or be destroyed by what comes." The armada fled.

We watched for decades as the Human ships waged war on the lifeforms. They utilized immensely powerful gravimetric weapons to force the lifeforms into the gravity well of the system star. As the lifeforms struggled to break free, the massive ships used their weapons to drive the system's planets and moons into the star. Finally, they surrounding the star and began to steadily bombard it with waves of gravimetric energy, incredible beams of ionized energy, and stunningly powerful lasers. The volume of space enclosed by the ships began to violently churn as the fabric of reality itself resisted the attack. As suddenly as they had appeared, the ships left – leaving behind, nothing. Only a slowly forming accretion disk revealed the presence of the singularity where a star had once been.

We acted. For the first time in a millennium, the golden throneship, more valuable than the wealth of a thousand systems combined, broke orbit from our star and slipped into hyperspace. Emerging near the Human's original Dyson Sphere, in the Human's home system, the great golden throne ship slowed and stopped, miniscule against the massive structure. Greetings in languages Humans had used centuries ago were broadcast from the throneship.

Protartis the Third, Sole Monarch of Thonraxia by birth, Supreme Ruler of the galactic sector by strength, and many, many other things, sat on the golden throne in the golden throne room of the golden throne ship. Thousands observed from stations around the royal concourse in the golden throne room. The Royal Retinue awaited in front of the golden throne. All watched the Dyson Sphere through vast windows, glassed with shields of energy.

A single vessel slowly appeared from a deep chasm in the side of the Dyson Sphere. No one in the golden throne room knew it, but the vessel was like an early Viking warship, its energy sail trailing sparking streams. Streams of glowing vapor trailed from the open mouth of the dragon figurehead. Two Humans stood in the bow of the ship. One with ebony dark skin and the other fair. Both wore intricate necklaces and belts of gems suspended by tendrils of energy over their light coats. The gems flashed

randomly as the energy pulsed through them. Under the light coats, seemingly blowing in a breeze, the pair wore plain tunics and leggings of a supple material. Soft boots covered their feet.

The ship sailed through one window as if the energy field that could turn the bolt from a Argorania Battle Sphere did not exist. It settled onto the royal concourse and the pair stepped out of the ship onto the gold floor. They walked up the royal concourse to the edge of the royal starburst that adorned the center of the concourse and stopped. Standing with hands lightly clasped in front of them, they waited.

Members of the Royal Retinue walked down the concourse from the golden throne to meet them. The Royal Ambassador of Thonraxia stepped forward. "Greetings from His Most Exalted, Rightful Heir of the Throne, Monarch Protartis the Third. The Great Protartis wishes..."

The dark skinned one of the two, a Human female, raised a hand, cutting him off. She regarded him with dark eyes. "Are you equal?"

"I am the Royal Ambassador," the Royal Ambassador stated.

"Do you speak for yourself?" the woman asked.

The ambassador drew himself up to his full 2 meter height, "I speak for the glorious Lord Protartis, Supreme Ruler of this sector."

The two humans proceeded to ignore him.

The Golden Voice of his Lord Protartis the Third stepped forward. He surveyed the two Humans. "Which of you should I address?"

The fair skinned one, a Human male, responded, "We both speak for ourselves; therefore, we each speak for humanity."

The Golden Voice pursed his lips, "I do not understand what that means."

"That saddens us," the female said.

The Golden Voice tried again, "Who sent you?"

"No one," the male responded, "We were free when you came."

The Golden Voice steadied himself. He began "On behalf of the Exalted Lord Protartis..." only to be cut off by a raised hand.

"Are you equal?" the male asked.

"I am the Golden Voice of Lord Protartis, Monarch of Thonraxia," he replied.

The two humans ignored him.

A great gasp rose from the throats of the thousands of beings in the throne room. Protartis the Third, rightful liege lord of all present, stood. Retainers hurried to assist him with his royal robes as he stepped heavily down the golden stair. Proceeding regally down the royal concourse, he stopped across the royal starburst from the human pair.

"I am pleased you have come," he announced, "We have watched you for six centuries as you have grown and prospered in our sector. Today, we are pleased to recognize Humanity as full citizens of this sector." The assembled beings gasped again. There were only 52 full citizen species in the entire sector. "We extend this honor as a symbol of our friendship."

"I am sorry, but you are mistaken," the female said. She looked around the hall of solid gold, observing the grandiose wealth on display by the species attending. She looked at the exotic art and the showers of precious gemstones that cascaded in everlasting loops in crystal fountains. She looked at the exotic foods and liquids the many beings dined on as they watched. She looked down at the giant diamond that formed the center of the Royal Concourse. She brought her attention back to Protartis the Third. "You have nothing we want; we only came to deliver a message."

Protartis the Third was flabbergasted. He shook his head and adjusted his long robes. He held out his hand and a royal retainer gave him a goblet which he drank from. Returning the goblet to the retainer he asked carefully, "And what is this message?"

The male spoke, "Three things. First, the singularity we created to contain the infestation will be stable for approximately a millennium, give or take a century or two. I suggest you prepare for its eventual collapse."

Protartis the Third replied, "My royal science college is monitoring this. What is the second part?"

"After this meeting," the woman said, "Humanity is leaving."

"Leaving?" Protartis asked, suddenly growing uneasy, "To what sector?"

The woman replied, "We are leaving this galaxy entirely."

Protartis sighed with relief. Then he caught himself. "You can do that?" He asked in disbelief.

"We have been preparing for four centuries," the man replied, "It is time."

"If you were preparing to leave, why contain the infestation?" Protartis asked.

"Why would we not help?" the woman replied.

"And the last part?" Protartis asked slowly, confused by the answer.

"You have watched us for six centuries. You watched as we left Earth and settled our system. You watched as we began to expand to the stars," the woman said. "You watched as we were attacked and driven back to Earth. You watched as we were attacked by species after species, many present today. You watched as we survived and slowly pushed back. You watched as we prospered and built. You watched as we molded systems to suit our desires. You watched as we contained the infestation. And now you say you act out of friendship."

The man continued the message, "If you had offered a helping hand as we struggled to the stars, if you had offered assistance as we defended ourselves against attack after attack, if you had sent aid as we slowly rebuilt our home, ravaged by decades of war. If you had sent care as we faced extinction from the wars and catastrophic damage they caused to our environment, if you had done a single one of these things, that would have been friendship. What you offer now is hollow and self-serving. What you offer now is ugly and beneath us. This is why we leave." The man paused, giving Protartis a long, measuring look. "Next time, be better."

The two turned and walked back to their ship. Boarding, they stood as it rose and sailed back through the window's field, returning to the dark chasm it had come from. The great golden throneship hung before the Dyson Sphere for a full week – broadcasting pleas, waiting in unfounded hope. At last, it returned to the Thonraxian system.

We watched as the eight colossal Dyson Spheres containing all of Humanity slowly made their way to the edge of the galaxy. In open space, they began to orbit a chosen central point in intricate patterns. The orbits slowly sped up until it seemed as if the eight were a single, impossibly immense globe, glittering on the edge of the galaxy. Then the globe collapsed into a single point of brilliant light and the Humans were gone.

We are the Thonraxians. For two millennia, we have ruled a wide sector of this galaxy. For six centuries we watched a young species struggle to survive and grow, offering no assistance. We were mistaken. We should have shown them friendship when they needed it so desperately. Now we know fear. What if the Humans do not find what they are looking for out in the vast universe? What if they return?

-----The End